

VZCZCXRO1232
PP RUEHDE
DE RUEHLO #4680/01 3621541
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 281541Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6815
INFO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 0305
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0757
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 0160
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0525
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 0190
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0244
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 2600
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 0494
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0591
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 0251
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY 0136
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3096
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0494
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI PRIORITY 0220
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0159

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 LONDON 004680

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/20/2017

TAGS: [EFIN](#) [KTFN](#) [PREL](#) [MNUC](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [UK](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN: ALLEGED EX-IRGC MEMBER LISTS QUDS FORCE
FRONTS IN IRAQ, CLAIMS TO REPRESENT "THOSE INSIDE"

REF: DECEMBER 4 EMBASSY LONDON-NEA/INR E-MAIL

Classified By: Political Counselor Richard Mills, Jr. for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S/NF) Summary. Mohammed Ali Khatami (please protect), claiming to have been in the past a long-term operative for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), provided London Iran Watcher (Poloff) detailed written allegations concerning long-term IRGC-Quds Force involvement in de-stabilizing Iraq. Khatami's written allegations, the validity of which Embassy is unable to assess, include dozens of Iraqi NGOs which he claims serve as false fronts in support of Quds Force operations, including attacks on Iraqi, U.S. and coalition forces. Khatami (no relation to former President of Iran Khatami) makes his claims in a draft article he wrote for a UK Arabic-language newspaper but which the author's London intermediary, an established Embassy contact, turned over to Poloff as too sensitive for publication. The article, which Poloff forwarded to Department (ref), gives general information on these NGOs without linking them to any specific incident or attack.

12. (S/NF) Summary con't. During a face-to-face meeting, Khatami told Poloff he had worked for much of the 1970s and 80s in Lebanon and Iran as a PLO, Hezbollah and IRGC trainer for "asymmetric" operations. He disclaimed involvement in any anti-U.S. terrorism. An Iranian-UK dual citizen now living in Dubai, Khatami said he met extensively in Washington before and after the 2003 Iraq invasion with Americans associated with Ahmed Chalabi and with at least one working-level USG official who has since left government. Khatami also said he has recently been asked by American-citizen Iranian expats associated with Reza Pahlavi to attend meetings in the UK and other European capitals in early 2008 to discuss "Iran's political future." Khatami claimed he would be an "informal representative" of political figures in Iran; he stated those figures include Rafsanjani, Qalibaf, Khatami and "others inside Iran" who are opposed to Ahmedinejad. Due to Khatami's deeply checkered history, his possible relationship with UK government officials, and his evident interest in associating the USG with regime change planning in Iran, Poloff plans no further follow-up or

contact. End summary.

Allegation: Quds Force Ties In Iraq Deep and Wide

¶3. (S/NF) Khatami's article, which Embassy is unable independently to assess, makes numerous allegations about the Quds Force's (QF) historical role in the Persian Gulf/Lebanon region. It consists principally of an awkwardly drafted but, in places, detailed listing of several dozen QF false fronts, some having little cover activity beyond their NGO name. Other named NGOs allegedly perform reconstruction, cultural, and humanitarian work in various sectors, while also, according to Khatami, providing training, funding and/or logistical and personnel support to militia/terrorist groups and operations. The below examples (paras. 4-6) are samples only, based not on a full translation, but on an informal gisting done at post, of Khatami's eight-page Arabic-language article, which Washington agencies may wish to translate more fully.

¶4. (S/NF) Khatami describes in great detail links between many Iraqi Parliamentarians and what he says are QF-controlled funding mechanisms. Khatami alleges the Iranian-spawned NGOs which support Iranians' pilgrimages to Shia shrines in Iraq in fact are supervised by QF commander Suleiman and his deputy Ahmad Feruzandeh; he says several dozen companies in Basra, Amara, Kerbala, Najaf, Al Nasariya, Diyala, Wasat and elsewhere are run along these lines. Khatami claims the Mohammed Bakr Al Hakim Foundation funnels up to USD 15 million per month to Iranian Ambassador Qomi and various Islamic Republic of Iran "consultants."

LONDON 00004680 002 OF 004

¶5. (S/NF) Khatami also claims QF personnel are transported between Iran and Iraq by the Al Kawther, Al Nour, and Dar Al Koran companies, which he says are controlled by Amar Al Hakim, son of Abdl Al Haziz Al Hakim; he claims these QF members travel and work under false identities, as engineers, doctors, and other skilled personnel. Khatami claims a similar level of influence and control is exercised by IRGC/QF personnel in major Iraqi press organs, notably Habib Al Sadr's "Al Iraqiya." Similarly, numerous QF-manned security companies, registered with the Iraqi interior ministry and in legal possession of arms, murder Iraqis with impunity, according to Khatami; he said one of these, the Al Wissam Company, is part of Hizbollah. Khatami's article lists what he claims are the "Quds Force salary numbers" for several Iraqi officials, including "Minister of State" Abu Mujtaba AKA Hassan Asari (salary number 70166) and Member of Parliament and Al Furat television station manager Abdul Hamid Mu'ualla (QF identity card no. 10002904).

¶6. (S/NF) An especially notable, and highly detailed, Khatami allegation is that some Iraqi Red Crescent Society members gather information in support of terror operations and, in coordination with the Imam Relief Committee, a large and well-known IRI foundation, help channel weaponry to groups in Iraq.

"My Life As An Islamic Revolutionary"

¶7. (S/NF) In a discussion in London on December 19, Khatami recounted to Poloff his complex and exotic life history, which allegedly includes years of PLO, Hezbollah, IRGC service; he said he had shared some but not all of this account with USG officials in Dubai. Born in Kerbala, Iraq in 1958 into an Iranian clerical family active in its resistance to the Shah's government and supportive of Khomeini in the 1960's and 70's, Khatami was raised in Kerbala and, after 1969, in Qom. His family's anti-Shah activities took them back to Kerbala in the 1970's where, Khatami claims, they were intimates of the Hakims; he also claims Ayatollah Montazeri was an early patron. He claims blood ties to the Al Sadr family through his mother's family.

Khatami said he remains an Iranian nationalist and "an Islamic idealist."

¶8. (S/NF) Khatami claimed he had spent some years before the Iranian Revolution in PLO-run facilities in Lebanon, being trained and then training Iranian recruits for "armed struggle for Islam." His trainees for the most part went back to Iran where they became early members of the IRGC during the Revolution, but HE admitted some wound up in MEK ranks. When the Shah fell, Khatami went to Iran to help train the IRGC; after Bani-Sadr's fall he "returned to field work" in Lebanon, where his Arabic helped him work with Hezbollah. He said he had nothing to do with the attack on the Marine Barracks or the kidnapping and murder of other US Embassy Beirut personnel, but said he knew a principal MOIS/Hezbollah planner of both operations, one Ahmad Muniah. Khatami said Muniah had also tried to have Khatami killed in 1987, as a political rival associated with the overly liberal Bani Sadr and, later, Montazeri.

Change of Heart When Targeted for Death

¶9. (S/NF) Khatami showed no remorse over his years of armed militancy, in which he still seemed to take pride. He said his loyalties to the regime in Tehran were dramatically affected, however, when IRI intelligence (MOIS) allegedly targeted him for execution while in Lebanon. He claimed internal MOIS rivalries made him a target, since he had backed fallen President Bani-Sadr, vice the radical "akhund" group through which Khomeini had consolidated his power. Khatami added that his loyalty to Ayatollah Montazeri also worked against him after Montazeri split from the Khomeini

LONDON 00004680 003 OF 004

line later in the 1980's. When a second MOIS execution attempt was foiled by Khatami's life-long protector within the MOIS, Ahmad Shujaiei (Embassy comment: IRPO Dubai may have received from Khatami current documentation on Shujaiei. End comment), Khatami, following a period of imprisonment, fled Iran permanently in 1989, acquiring political asylum in the UK later that year. He later naturalized in the UK, and lived in London through the 1990s, working at miscellaneous unmemorable jobs.

Embassy plans no further contact

¶10. (S/NF) Khatami said he developed an active relationship with UK intelligence authorities in the early 1990s, but that he later ended the relationship. (Embassy comment: Since Khatami's relationship with HMG authorities may still be active, Poloff plans no further contact with Khatami. End comment.)

Multiple Identities

¶11. (S/NF) Khatami said in Lebanon in the 70s and 80s he had used the nom de guerre Ahmad Abu. He recalled having used a Saudi passport at one point, but claimed he was uncertain under what name. He also showed Poloff his UK passport (number 093188351), issued under the name of Mohammed Ali, explaining that the UK document's variation on his name had been based in turn on an Iraqi passport, issued by an Iraqi diplomat in Kuwait who had a cultural preference for the Iraqi formulation Mohammed Ahmed Ali. He said he might be considered an Iraqi citizen as well as Iranian and British. Khatami told Poloff he would soon be having his UK name legally changed to Mohammed Khatami, which he said is his name in all his Iranian documentation. He said he has a wife and three children in Dubai and a sister and nephews in Los Angeles.

Khatami's U.S. Contacts, Then and Now

¶12. (S/NF) Khatami said he moved from UK to Dubai before the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He further claimed that, while working in Dubai as a small importer-exporter using his old Iraq ties, he had met repeatedly in Washington, beginning before the Iraqi invasion and until 2004, with well-placed U.S. supporters of military action in Iraq; he said Ahmed Chalabi had been his link to these Americans. Khatami said that, before the invasion, he provided his Washington contacts detailed information on the importance, in his view, of cultivating Shia leaders in southern Iraq, especially Hakim and the Sadrists. Khatami told Poloff that after the invasion he had urged upon his Washington interlocutors the importance of closing Iraq's borders and of not disbanding the Iraqi army. Khatami said that, extrapolating from what he called U.S. failure in Iraq "to have a good knowledge of the region beforehand," he has been invited to join, and plans to participate in, meetings in the UK and elsewhere in Europe of Iranian expatriates from the United States and elsewhere "to plan for Iran's political future." He said his role would be to act "as a representative of those inside (Iran)." He said "those inside" did not include members of Ahmedinejad's or Khatami's ruling circle, but do include loyalists of Rafsanjani, Qalibaf, Khatami, "and others." Poloff noted regime change is definitely not USG policy. (Embassy comment. Khatami, smiling politely, appeared to discount the caveat. Another Poloff contact separately confirmed that such an expats' "congress" is being considered and that Khatami has been invited by U.S. participants. End comment.)

Comment: One of the 1979 Revolution's Old Guard

¶13. (S/NF) In person Khatami is an experienced and adept

LONDON 00004680 004 OF 004

raconteur who, though a Dubai trader, gives an impression more of piety, intensity and frankness than of prosperity, polish, or business success. It was not clear how much, or which aspects, of his convoluted, but seamless and apparently sanitized, account of his operational history he also shared with his previous or current American interlocutors. Though Khatami may again visit the UK in coming months, Poloff has no plans for further contact or engagement with him. Regardless of his murky bio and antecedents, Khatami's evidently deep knowledge of and contacts within the region may make his written account of alleged QF activities in Iraq (the reliability of which Embassy is unable to assess) worth examining, while he himself may be a useful interlocutor for some on the details of IRGC history and personalities.

Visit London's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/london/index.cfm>
LeBaron